

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

It is not without reason that the Scripture directs to the believer to try the spirits whether they are of God, 1 John 4:1 and I suspect John may have had in mind the words of Jesus to him and James after they wanted to call fire down on a village of Samaritans that did not receive Jesus and Jesus said to them: “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of” Luke 9:54-55.

We are so apt to strike out at times without thinking where the action originates from just as John and James in that incident in Luke 9, we may feel ever so justified or righteous because of some offense or other but the words of Jesus certainly showed it was not of the right spirit, the Spirit of God.

No doubt we have come across those who say that they are led by the spirit (meaning the Holy Spirit) when in actual fact it appears to be an entirely different spirit that appears to manifest itself in their way of life. We do not judge people when we line up their proclaimed way of life with God's Word and it is good for us to do the same to ourselves first and foremost because it is the only way that one can determine what spirit we are of.

A dictionary definition of spiritual includes these points: 1] relating to the soul or spirit, usually in contrast to material things, 2] relating to religious or sacred things rather than worldly things, and 3] it portrays a person deeply concerned with anything to do with the spiritual.

People of other persuasions and one must include non-Christian religions in this, can be ever so spiritual. Many years ago we met some who were spiritualists and from their speech and way of life they appeared to be genuinely concerned about the eternal destiny of man, they spent much time in contemplation and meditation, they spoke of Jesus and Mary, of angelic and spiritual beings, they were concerned about the spiritual welfare of others but it was all false because they claimed to be guided by what the Scripture calls familiar spirits, Leviticus 19:31, 1 Samuel 28:9, Isaiah 8:9 and others.

Even God's people can be deceived and follow the wrong spirit and to that end we have a message on how to be correctly spiritually minded and another on Valentine's Day showing what it is to be incorrectly spiritually minded.

For those who are born again the only true spiritual guide is the Holy Spirit, it is He and He only who will guide us into all truth, John 16:13, our prayer is that the words of No. 157 in the Church Hymnal, “Holy Spirit faithful Guide ever near the Christian's side” may be fulfilled in your life and mine.

J.v.C



From the Pulpit

To Be Spiritually Minded is Life and Peace

From a message by Brother David Binkley

We are here this morning as a group of people who belong to God. I was impressed with that thought recently the fact that we belong to God and God should have control of our lives God has that rightful ownership of us. I trust that we will think about that as we meet to worship this morning we're also here this morning in the very presence of God, God has said that where two or three are gathered together in His name He is going to be there with them ([Matthew 18:20](#)) and so we believe that God's presence is with us this morning and every time as we meet in this way.

I invite your attention to Romans 8 for a text for the beginning part of our message this morning it is a chapter that is very familiar to us, it appropriately follows chapter 7 which speaks of the frustrations of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit then we have chapter 8 beginning with the thought of no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

So we believe that Jesus Christ is the one who supplies us with the power and strength to be freed from that conflict of the flesh and the spirit, not to be free from that in that it never has any conflict there at all but rather able to find victory in that conflict, be able to appropriate the grace of God.

We would like to centre out thoughts particularly this morning on chapter 8 where it says: For to be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, [Romans 8:6](#).

The last part particularly is what we are thinking about this morning, thinking of being spiritually minded is life and peace.

I would like to read this chapter from verse one through to verse 17.

[Romans 8:1-17](#) *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through

the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. ⁵ For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. ⁸ So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. ¹⁰ And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. ¹² Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. ¹³ For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. ¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. ¹⁵ For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. ¹⁶ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

Thinking of being spiritually minded is life and peace here in verse six I want to emphasise the thought about being spiritually minded, the difference between carnally minded and spiritually minded and with particularly emphasises on the question: What does it mean to be spiritually minded?

And I'm not sure where this definition came from but perhaps it is just a gathering together of a number of thoughts but I have worded it this way; "To be spiritually minded is to have a diligent interest in and obedience to the Spirit of God and how it works in our lives and relates to our spirit." That is perhaps over simplifying it maybe but I think there is a sense in which that is the basic root of it, a spiritually minded person is controlled by the Spirit of God and that the Spirit is working in his life, governing and guiding his life.

We could also raise the question; Must a person be spiritually minded in order to be saved?

That question I think we can answer in a measure anyway at least, in first Corinthians 3 it talks about the number of different levels of the spiritual experience if we dare call them that in this circumstance. Paul refers to them he says he would like to be addressing them as spiritual people, but in verse one he says, “And I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.” [1 Corinthians 3:1](#).

So he would like to have spoken to them as spiritual people but he was not able to, but rather he had to speak to them as carnal people and then he also refers to them or likens them unto babes in Christ.

Now we see a number of different levels there, we see a person there who was a carnal person and one cannot necessarily call that a level of spiritual experience perhaps, but we are looking at different levels here, and we also see a person who is a babe in Christ and that would be a level of Christian experience.

Not everyone that is a born again person necessarily is of full spiritual majority but here it would indicate that there are those who would be babes in Christ and even though they may not be as spiritual, if we can use that way of explaining it, as one who is mature yet we would certainly view that they are saved and we are happy that they have a spirituality and a degree of being spiritually minded.

And so we see those different levels here but I believe a person cannot be a spiritual person and I think we need to keep that in mind that it cannot be that way, a carnal person, there is no such thing as a continuation of being carnal and Christian if carnal Christian is a proper expression and I so think we want to remember that when a person becomes carnal he does not still remain a Christian indefinitely but that relationship again changes even though a person may grow cold in degrees we might say that is a point in which a person can no longer be viewed as being in a saved relationship.

I believe in order for us to be spiritually saved we are going to have to be a spiritually minded person and were going to have to be growing in our

spiritual experience and we will notice that here as we go through the message.

Now perhaps we should raise this question then: When am I a spiritual person?

I think that is a question each one of us ought to ask ourselves, I think sometimes we don't, we sort of hesitate to ask ourselves that question because we don't trust our own evaluation of ourselves sometimes and I think we can understand why we wouldn't but on the other hand I think each one of us should at least have a measure of confidence in the fact that we are spiritual people, if we don't have that then we better do something about it so we can have a measure of confidence in our spirituality and we realise yet that there is much room in our lives for growth in being spiritually minded and we recognise that and we want to move in that direction.

That is part of being a spiritually minded person.

Now when am I a spiritual person?

Coming back to Romans 8 again I think one of the things that we see here that would indicate to us whether we are a spiritual person or not is found in verse five where it says, "For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." [Romans 8:5](#).

We are spiritually minded person when we are minding the things of the Spirit and not the things of the flesh.

I think that is one way we can evaluate whether we are spiritual person or not, if the desires of the flesh and the appeals of the flesh are constantly finding the upper hand or getting the upper hand in our lives and are controlling our lives then we are not a spiritual person and I think that is clear here.

[Romans 8:7](#) says because the carnal mind is enmity against God for it is not subject to the law of God.

I think another way in which we can evaluate whether we are a spiritual person or not is whether we are in agreement with God's laws and God's will and with the direction that God is giving us through the brotherhood through the work of the Spirit or the work of His Word. Whether we are in agreement with that or not is an indication whether we are a spiritually minded person or not.

We are spiritually minded when we have life and peace.

Now we are talking this morning about being a spiritually minded person, one who confesses to be spiritually minded in mind in peace and we can take from that then that if we are experiencing life and peace that is an indication that we are a spiritually minded person. Now let's be careful that we do not deceive ourselves and simply allow ourselves to be convinced by the work of Satan that everything is okay and we are experiencing life and peace, I don't think that is a true test, but when we are honest with ourselves, when we are willing to evaluate ourselves in the light of the Word of God in the light of His Spirit, in the light of the other spiritual brethren and we find that we are living in life and peace and have that fulfilment that is an indication also that we are spiritually minded person.

I think also the privilege of sonship, if we are enjoying the privilege of sonship we find that here in verses 14 and 15: ¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. [Romans 8:14](#)

And I think that when we are enjoying that privilege of being a son [or daughter] of God, one who has been brought into the family of God by adoption, not because they are worthy of being there but because they have been adopted there because of the work of Jesus Christ, one who is enjoying that I believe is a spiritually minded person and one who is living in that experience and realisation of that experience is an indication of being a spiritually minded person.

God wants us to realise the fact that we are sons of His.

There is a sense in which we are a hired servant, slave of God in a sense, but we ought not to be looking at it simply from that standpoint, we ought to be looking at enjoying the privilege of being a son of God and I think one of the differences between that is the fact that we have the interests of the Father at heart and have the Father's business at heart like Jesus said, "Wist ye not that must be about my Father's business?" ([Luke 2:49](#)), it is an indication of a spiritually minded person, one who is interested in being a son and showing the qualities of being a son of God.

I think we see that here in Romans 8:14-15

I think that is important for us to look at it from the standpoint of having the Father's interests, the Kingdom of God at heart.

Do we, does our heart really move when we think about the struggles of the people of God and of the work of Christ, bringing souls into the kingdom, those who are lost, does our heart move within us at the knowledge that people need to be brought into Christ's kingdom and that the work of His kingdom must go on, is our heart moved by that and I think it ought to be if we are spiritually minded person.

How does the welfare of the church, the people of God, how does the well-being of God's people affect us?

We sing the song sometimes, I love Thy kingdom Lord, in the second verse it says, For her my tears shall fall/For her my prayers ascend/For her my cares and toil be given/Till toils and cares shall end.

Is that our experience that our heart beats and moves with work of God's Kingdom and the work of His people? I think it ought to be that way if we are a spiritually minded person.

I think also a spiritually minded person is one who has the understanding of the basic plan and purposes of God.

Now I realise that there is much about God's ways and God's movings on the earth that we do not understand fully but I think that a spiritually minded person will at least have a basic understanding of how God is working and I would like to look at first Corinthians 2 here briefly, I think it is indicated here and one could read a number of verses here, but starting at verse nine, [1 Corinthians 2:9-12](#):

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. ¹⁰ But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

I think the point, the thought in these verses, is of at least having a basic idea and understanding of God's will and God's ways with humanity.

So a spiritually minded person is also a discerning person.

In first Corinthians 2 again where I was reading we find in verse 14 it says, ¹⁴ But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. ¹⁶ For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. [1 Corinthians 2:14-16](#). It refers to the fact that he that is spiritual judges all things yet he himself is judged of no man, I think it is indicating where a spiritual people, a spiritually minded person is a discerning person that is able to evaluate the issues of life and able to decide what is right and what is wrong.

I think another indication of a spiritual person is that a spiritual person will want to have the attributes of God.

He will want to be a godly person, we think of godliness as being God likeness, I think that should be our greatest desire to be a person who has the attributes of God in his experience.

Paul says that godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. ([1 Timothy 4:8](#)).

Now for the remainder of the message I would like to look at some erroneous views relating to spirituality and I think that will help us to have a better understanding of what it means to be a spiritual person.

One erroneous view that sometimes is heard is that when a person is spiritual they will never need to be rebuked or reprovved or corrected in their life.

And that is not necessarily true, it does mean that a person will be open and responsive to the correction and instruction of others and of God but it does not necessarily mean that it will never happen, it is not true that a person who is spiritual enough will always be able to direct his life by himself properly, it does not mean that, but it will mean that he will always have a good attitude and be open to receive instruction.

It may also be said that a person who needs constantly to be reprovved, corrected, and instructed that it would be an indication of a person that certainly needs to mature in his being spiritually minded and perhaps he is not

even a spiritually minded person if he constantly finds himself at that point.

Being spiritual is a growing experience and therefore we recognise the fact that we need to be instructed at times and reprovved and corrected in order for us to be able to grow in our Christian lives.

Now another thought that is sometimes expressed is that if we are spiritual enough we won't make an issue over the small things, the surface things we might say, we won't make an issue over that and they won't be an issue to us, we will just be able to go along and overlook those things, and a person that raises some questions about some details in our Christian life well that person is not spiritual, if that person was spiritual you would overlook that and that will not be an issue with them.

This again is an erroneous view because the Christian life is made up of a life where God points us to Scripture a number of times that there are details that need to be followed and we need to be able to see the issues clearly and sometimes that relates to small details in life and we need to look at them properly.

I think what we have looked at in first Corinthians about being person who is able to discern and able to judge is right, it would indicate that a spiritually minded person is one who is able to see through those issues and to be able to chart a safe course and to be able to do the right things in the details of life so that it does not become a big issue with them.

I think that is a better understanding of the details of life how we relate to them, a person who is spiritual is one who is able to not make a big issue over them but to be doing what is right in those areas and to be coming out right in that and a person who is spiritual will also establish a practice and a lifestyle that will chart a safe course and is well within the bounds of what is right and therefore will not be constantly hassling with the little things of life.

I think that is an indication of a person growing in their spiritual maturity.

Another erroneous view that is sometimes brought up, and I suppose this is one that is very current in our day today, and sometimes it even shows up in those who maybe are in positions of leadership and that is the thought that people say sometimes, You can't legislate spirituality.

It is a view sometimes that is brought out, and it sounds right and there are aspects of it that are right.

In other words restrictions do not help make a spiritual people, you cannot force people to be spiritual, that's another way it is heard, and you can't persuade people to be spiritual if they don't want to be.

These thoughts are all related to each other in relation to not being able to legislate for spirituality and is that not true?

I think there is a sense in which that is true very definitely so.

I guess what is behind this view is the fact that that when people are spiritual enough they won't need any restrictions, they won't need any directives and guidelines to follow in life, and if a person is not spiritual if you try to restrict them and guide and direct them there is no hope for that and I don't believe that the motive behind it is right, I don't think that's a right view.

I would just like to evaluate that a little bit.

The truth is that we are not all at the height of spiritual maturity and therefore like I said earlier we are going to sometimes need to be corrected and directed in our lives and therefore we need some restrictions and guidelines and directions to keep us in a way of life that will be conducive to being spiritually minded and not allow us to go us into a way of life that will finally undermine our spiritual life and will destroy us. I think that's a right way to look at it.

We will never be a spiritual person in our own personal lives until we are willing to discipline ourselves and to restrict the body and the flesh within us, those desires, until that is restricted and disciplined we will never be a spiritual person and I think we need to look at it from that standpoint.

One can illustrate it this way using a bit of a personal illustration.

There was a time when I enjoyed going hunting and I suppose could still enjoy going hunting and I'm not necessarily condemning hunting by using this illustration but I felt that God led me to a realisation that there were more important things to be done rather than to spend so much time in going hunting.

Well the point of the illustrations is that in order for me to be able to keep that condition and to follow God's leading in that I needed to restrict my-

self and to discipline myself, I could not go and feed on page after page of the Game News and Outdoor Life and so on and yet still maintain the conviction that God wanted me to do more important things in life and so there was a restriction and discipline necessary in life and that allowed that conviction to grow.

And we could take that into a number of areas of our life, we could take that into our church life, finally when we live in a church life that gives us some direction and restricts us from going in the wrong way that helps us to develop conviction and to develop spiritual life and calibre.

Now we realise that it doesn't do it by itself, if a person doesn't want to grow spiritually, no amount of direction and guidance and restriction will help them, but it does provide a basis on which we can establish a way of life that will influence us in the right direction and will provide a way of life that will be conducive to our spiritual growth and maturity and I think that is the way we need to look at it.

It is true that we cannot force people to be spiritual but we can provide an atmosphere and a church life that is conducive to spirituality and that is what we want to do and that's what we want to do in our own personal lives first of all and then we want to also to be able to do that as a people, as a group and I think that is the way we need to look at it in relation to spirituality.

Now we might say this yet in relation to that and that is that while we cannot force people to be a spiritual people if they don't want to be a spiritual people we can guard the church so that others in the church will not be influenced by carnally minded people and that is another side of the need of guidance and direction and restrictions.

Now another erroneous view that sometimes seems evident is that being Conservative or ultraconservative is being spiritual.

And that is an erroneous view as well, just because a person is ever so Conservative, takes an ever so Conservative approach to his Christian life, and to his appearance it does not mean that he is a spiritual person. I think we understand that but sometimes it seems like that is evident among some

people that if a person wants to be a spiritual person he has the concept that if they become extra Conservative that somehow means that he is spiritual, and that in itself is not wrong if a person is very careful and diligent in his Christian life as long as he is able to blend in with other spiritual brethren which he works among but it does not necessarily guarantee that a person is spiritual.

A person can be a carnally minded person and put on a cloke of conservatism and it doesn't mean a thing to him as far as his spiritual life is concerned and so let's be careful that we guard ourselves in those areas well, let's not endeavour to be a spiritual people by simply covering up and putting on a surface appearance but let's be spiritually minded because of the experience of the heart, that we are allowing God's spiritual work in our hearts and life and to control us there and to find victory over the things of the flesh.

We might, perhaps we should say this in relation to being ultraconservative as relates to being spiritual, actually it isn't the extra Conservative position that is necessarily the right one but it is the proven practice of a spiritual people that has been proven to work over the years and times and is first of all in accordance with the Word of God, that is the practice that will help us to be a spiritual person.

I think we need to keep looking at it from that standpoint.

Now another erroneous view right along with that is if a person is really strongly individualistic that he is a spiritual person.

In other words if a person stands for what he believes regardless of whether it is in harmony with other spiritual brethren or not or whether it is in harmony with the Word of God, this person stands strong for what he believes and that person is a spiritual person.

There again I think we can see through the fallacy of that.

Our spiritual lives and our spiritual experience is understood and its experience as we blend ourselves together with a spiritual people and as we regulate our way of life according to a spiritual people that are looking into God's Word and discovering there what God would have them to do and then putting it to practice, that is where we find true spiritual meaning, as

we allow God's Spirit to direct us in understanding the Word and as we allow and recognise that God's Spirit is directing our brethren and sisters and they are in turn influencing us and we are blending our lives together as a spiritual people and understand together what God's will is for our lives that where we find true spiritual life and experience.

Rather than necessarily taking a strong individual position, I think we need to be blending ourselves as long as we are in a spiritual group when that is not the case then of course that does not work and it is not safe.

In conclusion I would like to look at how do we become a spiritual person. Perhaps that is the question we face here this morning: How do we become more spiritual?

We trust that each one of us here this morning is at some level of spiritual maturity, we would least like to have that confidence among us here this morning but how do we grow, how do we become more spiritual, and actually that should be our desire and I'm confident that it is the desire of each one here this morning.

First of all and I might say right away that there is no simple formula that will be a cure all, there is nothing like that that I know of, and there is nothing that is profoundly necessarily as far as I know that we could say about how to become more spiritual.

First of all I believe it is by diligent study of the Word of God as we open our lives and allow the Spirit of God to direct our lives and to give us understanding and enlightenment of His Word and diligently studying that word that will help us to become a more spiritual person.

Spending more time reading the word of God.

Well we might say we can read and read and read and if you don't really study it doesn't really mean anything to you well it might really help you.

Well there is a sense in which that is true but it is also true that as we spend more time with the word of God, God is able to speak to us through the word and we want to then diligently study the word, compare scripture with scripture.

In first Corinthians it talks about the spiritual person being one who is comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Corinthians 2:14) making the

right comparisons and being able to rightly divide the scriptures and able to put it in its proper category and fit together the verses that belong together.

More digging into the word of God I think is a way to be more spiritual and less reading of the so many books that are around. If we want to be a more spiritual person we had best read, or the majority of our reading should be the word of God and there would be some other books that may help us but I believe that once we go beyond a certain point of safe reading material then our potential for becoming a more spiritual person will go downhill rapidly.

The way to be more spiritual person is to spend more time with the word of God and then also there will also be some time that we need to spend with those who also are spiritual people who can give us inspirational thoughts of their own about the word of God.

Nothing can take the place of personal Bible study and studying the Bible ourselves rather than running to a commentary and looking what the commentary says and then saying, Well that's how I believe! but rather looking at the word of God and evaluating scripture with scripture and understanding the word as the Spirit of God works in our life.

Praying is another way to be a more spiritual person.

These are all basic but it is the only way to be a spiritual person, more time spent in prayer, actually fellowshiping with God and asking God to direct us with His Holy Spirit is the way to be a spiritual person, we might say that's a very simple thing but when we do that, when we spent time in true and sincere prayer before God He will help us to grow in our spiritual experience and will cause us to be a spiritual person.

With that we would see the real burden in our prayer and have the sincere desire in prayer and we see that the Bible assumes that with some of our prayer will also go fasting, denying the flesh of the things which would be rightful for a time simply to give our hearts fully to the will of God, to know God's will and to implore God's help in our lives.

And then another way to grow in being or becoming a more spiritual person is to align ourselves with a spiritual group and supporting it.

I think that's another basic way, if we want to be a more spiritual person we are going to need to be a part of a people who are spiritual people and that will help us to be spiritual ourselves in our own lives and of course if we simply are part of a spiritual people and not really in support of that group not very much will come out of that but when we are a part of a spiritual people and putting our heart into it and trying to benefit from it in every way we can and contribute to its spiritual way of life then I believe God will help us become more spiritual ourselves.

Last of all we can be more spiritual by guarding our associations with those who are not spiritual.

That is perhaps a negative side of it, but if we are going to fellowship freely with those who do not obey the word of God and are not following or allowing the Holy Spirit to lead them in understanding the Word of God in truth we are going to lose out spiritually, we will become a less spiritually minded person and we will finally become a carnally minded person.

That's just the way it works, that's the law of sowing and reaping we might say.

So we need to evaluate those whom we associate with, are they spiritual, and when we say spiritual we must evaluate whether they are obeying the Spirit of God in line with the Word of God and then we can discover whether they are spiritual and whether they will influence us to be more spiritual in our own lives.

I trust that these thoughts will help us in being a spiritually minded people and above all that they will help us to allow God's Spirit to control our lives and to give us the strength and the desire above all allow Him to lead us in every area of life and to be free from the things of the flesh so that He might have His way in our lives.



Valentine's Day – The Christian's View

By Brother Dennis - Denver Mennonite Church – February 2013

I greet you this evening in the name of our Lord Jesus.

According to the calendar this holiday, the world's holiday, Valentine's Day is the 14th of February, tonight we want to look at the Christian's view of Valentine's Day.

I suppose the larger issue that we are focused on this evening is the Christian's view and the Christian's response to cultural influences.

You know how it is for the Christian we tend to have that tendency to slowly absorb the thinking and the practice of the culture around us, that is always the tendency before us and when that happens the church becomes like the world, maybe not to the same degree and to the same extent or in every area but there is an accommodation to the world.

Valentine's Day is the world's holiday of love; it is a holiday of the culture around us. One writer said this to women that Valentine's Day is as important as Christmas.

Valentine's Day is not relegated to one culture; it is a holiday that is observed by many people in many parts of the world.

Valentine's Day is not something that is new or something that is modern, many practices, many observances of this day go back hundreds of years at least back to the 1400s, maybe even earlier than that.

And thinking about cultural practices they are not necessarily all wrong, maybe not necessarily all evil and not all sensual and yet the Scripture does warn us, there are a number of places in Scripture where we are warned not to pattern after the world's evil ways and not to pattern our lives or imitate the wrong ways of the world.

It is true that many of these practices and symbols that are related to Valentine's Day and some of the other holidays seem quite innocent and very harmless in themselves.

After all what could be wrong with exchanging cards on Valentine's Day?

What could be wrong with expressing our love or affection for and to our friends, what could be wrong with that?

Is it really wrong to use the symbol of the heart as an expression of human love?

And we could certainly reason like this that the celebration or practices of Valentine's Day are lot less sinister then take for example the practices related to Halloween with all ghosts and goblins and witches and wizards and the darkness, the graveyards, the bones, we say well Valentine's Day is very innocent when we contrast that or compare it with a holiday like that.

Well tonight we don't necessarily want to compare one day with another, I think our interest is to try and understand how God would have us view the practices of our day, we want to view it from a biblical perspective as much as we can to help us know how we ought to think rightly about this.

And parents if we think rightly maybe we can help our children to think rightly and to help them face the pressures in a right way.

I would like to begin this evening by looking at about for different scriptures.

I invite you to John chapter 17, you will recognise this chapter as Jesus high priestly prayer, His prayer for you and for me, His prayer for all His followers and I would like to especially note His interest, His concern for us in our relationship with the world and with the evil that is a part of the world.

Let's begin at verse 14, [John 17:14-17](#) ¹⁴ I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Just a few things I would like to point out from these few verses.

I see Christ here making a clear distinction between His followers and the people of the world, He notes that there is a line that is going to be drawn between the two if His followers are going to be kept separate from the evil.

Christ's desire for you and for me is that we today would be kept from the evil that is in the world, He wants there to be a separation between us and the world and I notice especially here in verses 14 and 17 that He has made provision for it to be that way, He has given us His word, I have given them Thy word, verse 14, and verse 17, Sanctify them through Thy Truth, Thy word is truth.

We know what God's desire is for us, a separation, a clear distinction between us and the world, not only does He want that He has made provision for that and we come to the Word tonight to help us understand this matter of Valentine's Day.

Now let's go next to second Corinthians chapter 6, we have some similar teaching here and I want to notice how it is carrying it just a little bit further, we noticed Christ's desire for us, His provisions for us now let's notice what we have.

Again beginning at verse 14, [2 Corinthians 6:14-18](#) ¹⁴ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. And [2 Corinthians 7:1](#) ¹ Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

You notice now the incompatibility between the Christian and being a part of the world's culture, those two do not fit together, life and darkness don't mix, Christ and Belial have no concord, the believer and the infidel are not going to be joined together they are incompatible, the ways of the world are incompatible they are not fitting to the child of God and the follower of Christ.

And I see God here taking it a bit further it is not only telling what His desire is, we not only know what the provisions are but now we have that call to us to respond to it and separate ourselves from the evil, come out be ye separate, verse one of chapter 7, keep yourselves clean, don't become entangled with these things of the world that would contaminate and destroy.

Now let's notice two scriptures from the old Testament, I'm going to turn first of all to Leviticus 18 the other Scripture we are going to notice is from the book of Deuteronomy but they are both addressed to God's people, the children of Israel.

In Leviticus 18 I believe we have a chapter that is an introduction to the covenant on morality God had with his people and I'm just going to read verses two and three,

Leviticus 18:2-3 ² Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the LORD your God. ³ After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances.

He goes on to say that the ordinances that you keep and follow My ordinances, don't pattern after the world, don't look to the world to know how to live and to know what the practice.

Let's turn next to **Deuteronomy 18:9**. I would like to pull out again a warning to Israel, When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

God was telling them that in the land where He is taking them there is going to be a people with pagan practices, they are going to be worshipping idols, they are not going to be serving Me, what they are doing is wrong and you do not pattern your lives after their lives.

His desire for Israel was just as we noted from the New Testament as God's desire is for us today.

I understand this verse is telling Israel that they were not to become accustomed to the practices that were going to be around, they were not to allow that to affect their thinking and their practice, don't allow them to teach you.

In [Jeremiah 10:2](#) God had this to say to the prophet Jeremiah: Learn not the way of the heathen,

Well that teaching to Israel is parallel to the New Testament teaching that God would have for us.

Now secondly let's consider how Valentine's Day fits with the tenor of Scripture as we have just noticed.

I would title this section of the message "The World's Counterfeit."

We said it is the world's holiday of love and it seems like any time we have something good from God and something right from God, everything from God's right but all those things are things that Satan tries to counterfeit, tries to counter in one way or another and I think we will notice that as we compare the world's celebration of love to what the Scripture would teach and what the Scripture would express.

Let's think briefly about the origins of Valentine's Day.

If you study anything about the origins you will quickly discover there are a number of different explanations, various explanations that are rooted in pagan mythology.

There are some that tried to trace it to a Roman Festival that was celebrated to ensure fertility for people and for the fields and flocks. There are others that try to link it with an old English believe that birds chose their mates on this day and along with that is a partly religious concept that associates an early saint who was supposedly executed on February 14.

So those are some of the explanations for the origins of Valentine's Day.

I think we are familiar with a lot of the symbols for the day, you see the paper hearts, the lace and the flowers, the heart shaped boxes of candy, the cupids and the hearts that are associated with Valentine's Day they are related to the Roman God of love named Cupid and in Greek mythology he is called Eros.

And I'm not going to share just a whole lot about this mythology tonight I don't think it would be fitting in a worship setting like this but in keeping with the heathen concept of a multiplicity of gods that control every aspect of life Cupid represented the human heart and his wife Psyche the soul.

I'm simply going to say that there were many sensual practices that were a part of the worship of these gods; if you study into that it doesn't take long to become aware of that.

The earliest images of Cupid pictured him as a handsome young man; we don't see much of that now but in our time he is rather portrayed as a chubby and part-clothed infant that is holding a bow and arrow and supposedly a person that is shot with one of his golden arrows falls in love. Those are some of the symbols of Valentine's Day.

And again we are at least somewhat acquainted with some of the practices that are associated with the day; there are various practices that have been associated with this holiday through the years.

One of the older practices was to write the girl's or a woman's name on slips of paper put them in a jar and in the young men or men would withdraw those slips of paper with a name on from that jar and the woman whose name was on that paper that he had drawn would become his Valentine and throughout the year he would pay special attention to her.

This custom of practice of sending Valentine's Day cards with romantic messages were popular in the mid-1800s.

Well I don't need to tell you that today that is big business, I just heard recently that they expect about \$18 billion to be spent this Valentine's season. You walk through the aisles of your local Department store and consider the aisle space and the shelf space that is dedicated to the celebration of this day.

Those are some of the practices in our culture.

Where do we face the pressure today?

Well consider at the out-start that the tendency to become involved in the customs of the day is real and maybe for this particular holiday it is especially a pressure that our young people face and I believe that is why it is important that we as parents are alert to that, the pressure to accommodate in small ways.

The world about us is flaunting the message of Valentine and we also have a desire to communicate our expressions of appreciation and love and our young people might struggle with the question, Should I give a Valentine card to my friends or to my special friend, is that appropriate?

Or maybe the younger children have questions like this, Is it okay to bake heart shaped cookies and decorate them with pink and red and white icing to give to my friends?

Or what about agreeing with our friends to wear pink or black to fit in with the spirit of the holiday?

And maybe even broader than just Valentine season is the use of the heart symbol, the hearts that are drawn in letters that are written from one friend to another, Is that appropriate, is that in keeping with a Christian's view of this day and the symbols that are associated with the day?

I would like to move to the next part of the message now and think about the Christian's response.

We thought about some of the background, some of the symbols, some of the practices, some of the areas of pressures that we are facing today.

How do we respond to Valentine's Day?

I would say first of all considering the background of this celebration should that not automatically sound a note of caution to us, to the Christian; shouldn't we automatically be cautious of how we respond?

It is a holiday, it is a date so laden with pagan origin and pagan customs that it would be rather hard to defend it from a Christian perspective, really I think it would be impossible to do that.

And that is true of so many of the holiday celebrations not only Valentine's Day but even many of the celebrations of Christmas Day, the Christmas tree and the Christmas lights and the nativity scenes, the gift giving and then the Easter Bunny related to Easter and the Easter eggs and the list goes on.

It is so hard to defend those things from the Christian perspective when you consider the origin and the background to them.

You know to accept the world's symbols and the world's practices are going to lower the sacredness of love to a very human level or even a sensual level. Would it not be better for the Christian and, would it not be better for us to give our tokens and messages of appreciation and love at other times of the year, would it not be more fitting rather than trying to fit in with the world's time and methods?

Should we not be as followers of Christ should we not be avoiding pagan symbols of cupid's and hearts and arrows.

The use of the heart is very prolific in our day and I'm not saying that is all wrong but let's think about that and think about where it comes from, I don't really think it has any place on engagement cards and wedding invitations, remember it is one of the symbols of the world.

That is part of the Christian's response.

Let's think of the positive side of our response.

Remember we are thinking about the world's celebration of love, how do we as Christians view love?

We want always remember that the origin of love is God, does not the Scripture tell us that God is love? [1 John 4:8](#)

He is the origin, He is the source of love, the greatest expression of love was God's gift to us His Son Jesus Christ and that is the supreme manifestation of love.

But God has also given to mankind the capacity to love and the ability to love his fellow man God has given that capacity and ability to us.

In [Genesis 2: 18-23](#) we have God creating a help meet for man, He said it is not good that the man should be alone and God met Adam's need by creating a helpmeet for him, it helps suitable for him the woman Eve and in doing that the universal law of attraction between man and woman was set into motion when God created that woman for man.

And maybe this could be one application to what proverb writer referred to when spoke of the way of a man with a maid, I think there are probably some other things in focus in that verse, he talks about the way of an eagle in the air, the way of the serpent upon a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea and the way of a man with a maid, [Proverbs 30:19](#)

You know there is something that we really do not understand and comprehend how that thing works, that law that God has put into motion that attraction between man and woman, the fact, someone said it this way: The course of love can hardly be predicted or explained by man.

And maybe that aspect of it is what makes men so susceptible to myth and imagination; it is why they have to come up with all sorts of mythology to try to explain this course of love.

Well this love is of God by this God created attraction, it is something that needs to be carefully guarded and carefully directed because so quickly it degenerates into carnal lust and allurements.

Samson's interests were fleshly carnal and he suffered much because of his indulgence. You will remember how he said to his parents: Get her for me for she pleases me, she pleases me, [Judges 14:3](#)

Love is of God, the origin of love is God and God has given to mankind that ability to love, the capacity to love and be loved.

Thinking little bit more about this love, true love.

You know Christians do not fall into love neither do they fall out of love rather the Scripture would portray a setting of our affection which begins that growth of love and setting our affection involves a time and a process it is not something that happens in a moment, we are not struck with an arrow and fall in love but rather it comes about as a setting of our affection on a person and involves the time factor and is a process.

Growing in love involves learning to communicate with each other and being able to arrive at mutual understanding on matters and issues.

True love is an act of the will, we choose in our hearts, we choose to love in our hearts and in our minds.

If you love your friend you have chosen to think that way about your friend.

Love means choosing what is right and choosing what is best rather than doing what you may want to do or feel like doing.

It is that kind of love, true love, that choice that love that keeps many relationships alive.

Love is not determined by our feelings, nowhere does it say in Scripture to love others if you feel like it, it is not something that is dependent on feelings because we cannot command our feelings, they come and they go, they are a little bit like the tides of the ocean one time it is coming in and

the next time it is going out that is why we dare not allow feelings to be our guide.

True love does not need a lot of the gushy sentimental expressions like you find in our society presently.

Now I am not saying tonight that there does not need to be a wooing and a winning of love, I'm not saying that there is no romance in love but this wooing and this romance are not love in themselves.

True love is stronger, true love is deeper than the superficial expressions of the world's love.

We do not have a lot of young sisters here this evening but could I leave this challenge with you tonight that the next time you have written communication with a friend try leaving out those worldly sensual expressions of cheap love.

And as parents it is a challenge for us that we are aware of that type of communication with our children and with our young people.

In conclusion here tonight that in this area as in other areas I'm glad that we have been delivered from a lot of the Pagan practices of our culture, that we have developed conviction against them but brethren and sisters we are always in danger of returning to these cultural practices.

I believe that is why we look at subjects like this occasionally.

Let's continue to adopt and develop biblical conviction because in the end we want to be on the Lord's side do we not, in the end we want to have the Lord's name written on our foreheads, we want to have His identification but to get to that right end, to have that good end the Apostle James writes that we have to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. [James 1:27](#)

May God help us to that end.



WORSHIP IN CHURCH

"Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people" [Isaiah 56:7](#)

There has been a concern in my heart for some time, for myself first, involving the above verse. In reading some of our forefathers' writings on this subject, it would seem we are living in a different era than they. And yet, where does this leave us as we think of what God would desire for this time?

Our churches have been built with the thought of worship and prayer in mind. Surely many times throughout the building process, the people thought ahead to the time when all would be quiet—the Word would be read, songs would be sung, prayers would be prayed, and hearts would be converted.

What, in our minds, is proper activity in our worship service? Following are a few things that would tend to draw away from the service rather than enhance it.

While sitting up front once waiting for the service to start, my heart was saddened to hear the young people sitting down and avidly discussing the events of a Saturday full of activities. It seemed that even after the song number was given out, a few words had to be crammed in yet. I wondered whether their fathers visit, too, right up to the opening song?

Recently we had a young man visit in our congregation. One of his first questions was, "Why all the talking before church?" In his church, there was quietness, thus giving more time to think and prepare for the sermon. His words have often been a reminder to me since that time.

There are also those times when after a serious service, we turn around after prayer, and the one next to us asks us if we have a busy week planned. Sometimes this is a deliberate effort to sidestep the conviction that is stirring in the heart. Other times it may just be an error made without thinking. If we are not careful and get involved in conversation about earthly matters, we go home feeling empty. The sermon that the Holy Spirit tailored just for us is replaced with interests of common everyday life. We are starting a new week with the same cares we should have left on Saturday.

There is a proverb that runs something like this: "Grandfather breaks out the land, his son farms the land and becomes wealthy, and the grandson

spends the wealth accumulated." In three generations, it is gone. Is there a parallel for us in this? Our forefathers hardly spoke aloud in church and for sure did not condone laughing. Their sons endeavoured to keep this reverence and teach it to their sons. With this respect taught by their fathers, they were blessed with thoughts of Sunday that they could share during visitation during the week. Now every once in a while we hear laughter spilling forth in the church building. What will we visit about during the week? We do well to remind ourselves that we are in God's house.

Another area that we could look at is the need for disciplined parents in church. Yes, parents who are willing to be disciplined enough to not give in to their child's wants. I believe children hear far more of what the minister is saying than we give them credit for. Why, then, do we keep them from listening by allowing them books and pens and paper? I remember an older father telling me once that children can be taught to sit still without these helps. His advice has proven true in his children.

It is so easy after church to let our little ones run at will. We parents get involved, hopefully discussing spiritual matters, and we realize that for some time our child has been absent. Usually our ears tell us where they are a while before we find them. Is the library, nursery, or even outside a playground for our children? I have distinct memories of my father keeping a firm grip on my hand after church. Those memories serve to strengthen my diligence today.

We don't want to paint a discouraging picture. We all can remember the warm visits, quiet times when after an especially meaningful sermon that sober quietness pervaded the house of prayer. We also know of those times when a special love stole over us for the brethren. We wouldn't have these blessings if we didn't have our churches as they are now.

May we find still more of those blessings as God inspires us to true worship.

Your brother in weakness,

Brother Les

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